***Pennsylvania Farmland Preservation Association***

2014 Spring Business Meeting

**Reading Crowne Plaza, Wyomissing, PA**

**Berks County Hosts**

May 1, 2014

**ATTENDANCE**

**Executive Committee**

Matt Knepper, Lancaster County - President

Ellen Dayhoff, Adams County **-** Vice President

Cindy Kahley, Union County **-** Treasurer

Sarah Walter, Blair County - Secretary

Donna Fisher, Blair County **-** Member-at-Large

**Guests**

Doug Wolfgang, Director, PA Bureau of Farmland Preservation

Stephanie Zimmerman, Admin Officer II, PA Bureau of Farmland Preservation

Sally McMurray, Professor of History, Penn State University

Katie Hess, Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission

Gary W. Smith, President/CEO, Chester County Economic Development Council

Jodi Gawker, Staff, Chester County Economic Development Council

Dave Stitzman, Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit

Jim Baird, American Farmland Trust

**County Administrators and County Staff**

Cindy Sanderson and Mark Clowney, Adams County

Joe Petrella, Beaver County

Richard Harvey, Bucks County

Ronald Fodor, Butler County

Tracey Crawford, Crawford County

Stephanie Williams, Cumberland County

Sherri Clayton, Franklin County

Eric Johnson, Lackawanna County

Angie Foltz, Lebanon County

Jeff Zehr, Lehigh County

Elizabeth Emlen, Montgomery County

Maria Bentzoni, Northampton County

Eric Naylor, York County

**WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, RECOGNITIONS, AND MILESTONES**

President Knepper welcomed everyone and thanked the Conference Committee and Ellen Dayhoff for their efforts to organize the Spring Meeting. Tami Hildebrand welcomed the group to Berks County. President Knepper led introductions around the room. Ellen Dayhoff announced that Adams County is approaching the 20,000 acre milestone and is planning a celebration for the Fall.

**OPENING**

President Kneppercalled the meeting to order at 9:19 AM.

Membership Roll Call was read by Secretary Walter. Sixteen voting members were present determining a quorum.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

President Knepper explained that Sarah Walter/Centre had replaced Becky Wiser/Cumberland as Secretary following Becky’s resignation from her job. President Knepper requested that FPPA ratify her appointment. ***Maria Bentzoni/Northampton moved to ratify Sarah Walter’s appointment to Secretary. Sherri Clayton/Franklin seconded the motion. No objections. Motion carried.***

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

The October 9, 2013 business meeting minutes were distributed in the conference packets. ***Cindy/Union moved to approve the October 9, 2013 minutes. Donna Fisher/Blair seconded the motion. No objections. Motion carried.***

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

Treasurer Kahley distributed and discussed the Treasurer’s Report with the balance on hand April 16, 2014 as $2,807.45. ***Rich/Bucks moved to accept the Treasurer’s Report. Joe/Beaver seconded. No objections. Motion carried.***

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

Cindy Sanderson presented the Membership Report. Out of 67 Counties, 57 have an Ag Land Preservation Program. 30 Counties have paid for voting membership, leaving 27 non-member Counties. There are four outside contributing memberships. ***Ellen Dayhoff/Adams moved to accept the Membership report. Sherri Clayton/Franklin seconded. No Objections. Motion carried.***

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Public Relations Committee –** Donna Fisher gave an update on the PFPA website and encouraged Counties to submit photographs of preserved farms to post. She reported that a chat area had not yet been implemented, but she is looking into it, and that Counties should let her know if there is anything they would like added to the website. Ellen Dayhoff reported that she has been contacted via the website with questions from the general public. If the question was in reference to a specific County, she passed on the correspondence.

Cindy Kahley reported that Ag Progress Days (APD) is scheduled for August 12-14, 2014. It will cost $350 to participate. Cindy asked if PFPA would like to have a booth at Ag Progress days in 2014. There will be mileage reimbursement available for anyone that works at the booth for a 4-hour shift during APD.

There was a discussion regarding the cost of General Liability Insurance that also covers PFPA’s booth during events like APD. Cindy emphasized that the display is cumbersome and costly to transport, and is also in need of minor maintenance, and suggested that PFPA consider purchasing a smaller tabletop display. Cindy will distribute a survey to the membership regarding display needs to determine if a new, smaller display would be appropriate. Joe reported that he feels it is important that PFPA attend APD due to the number of individuals that attend and interact with the booth. Maria offered to let PFPA use her County’s display for events. ***Ellen Dayhoff/Adams moved to renew PFPA’s General Liability Insurance policy so that PFPA can attend APD. Maria Bentzoni/Northampton seconded. No objections. Motion carried.***

**Conference Committee –**Tracey Crawford/Crawford reported that the Fall 2014 Conference will be in Crawford County from 9/30-10/2/2014. Accommodations will be at the Riverside Inn and the speaker will be Tom Hylton. Ellen Dayhoff thanked Tracey for Crawford County’s efforts.

Ellen Dayhoff/Adams reported that the Spring 2015 PFPA/PALTA Conference will be held in Gettysburg at the Wyndham Hotel, May 7-9, 2015.

President Knepper reported that PFPA may call for special meetings to discuss legislative issues as needed in 2014, the quorum for these meetings is 10 members.

**Policy Committee Report** – President Knepper gave a report on legislation of interest (see handout). The following bill was discussed in detail:

* HB1126: Maria reminded the group to try to identify possible ROW areas/issues before placing the easement and excluding them if possible. Especially appropriate for proposed trails or residential sites.

President Knepper references the Policy Positions Handout that was voted on at the Spring 2013 PFPA Business Meeting. See handout for proposed changes to wording of positions on legislation. President Knepper will e-mail a survey to voting members to prioritize legislative issues.

**Executive Committee** – Ellen Dayhoff introduced a proposed Conference Policy. ***Maria Bentzoni/Northampton moved to adopt the Conference Policy as proposed. Tami Hildebrand/Berks seconded. No objections. Motions carried.***

**OLD BUSINESS –** None

**NEW BUSINESS**

President Knepper announced the National Farmland Preservation Conference which will take place May 12-13 in Hershey, PA.

President Knepper announced that the State is working on guidance of County Guidelines and the State Easement Deed to reflect the new requirements regarding biennial inspections.

**PFPA ROUND TABLE**

There was a discussion regarding exclusion of land for residential building lots or other purposes (trails, rural enterprises, etc.).

Maria/Northampton shared her experience utilizing frozen millage rates (Act 4) for preserved farms, emphasizing that all partied have to agree to freeze millage rates (including school districts), the rate freeze does not apply to excluded areas, and the millage rate jumps in the future for all involved parcels if the school district withdraws from the program.

Maria/Northampton also shared her experience with a 0.25% earned income tax (EIT) increase for open space preservation at the municipal level and possible Guidelines language to allow farms to be preserved out of order and dollars to be certified with the State.

A general discussion of Easement Deed discrepancies followed.

**Lunch – *The Official Meeting remains open until the end of the day to permit action on any issues.***

President Knepper welcomed the group back from lunch and introduced Dave Stitzman of Mid Atlantic Farm Credit (PFPA Sponsor).

President Knepper introduced Jim Baird of the American Farmland Trust. Jim summarized three AFT reports for the group.

* National Study of FRPP Program
* Land Trusts and Ag Easements
* CEAP Program Study (NRCS)

**PA Department of Ag Update** - President Knepper introduced PDA Bureau of Agricultural Preservation staff Doug Wolfgang and Stephanie Zimmerman. Doug thanked PFPA for the invitation. Doug reported that for fiscal years 2014/2015 there is no elimination of cigarette tax in State Funding with a threshold of 30 Million projected. Counties certified 1.2 Million more dollars in 2014 than in 2013. The State expects more than 50 M in Federal reimbursements. The PDA budget is improving, and Doug also gave a summary of the Land Trust reimbursement program. Doug reported on changes to the Federal ALE/ACEP program, the State is currently working on a cooperative agreement with NRCS. Doug reminded Counties to spend down funds. Thanks to AFT and all involved in engaging in ALE rulemaking. PAFarmland Phase II is currently in progress and will include a GIS component. Expect funding delays at the State level. New ASA Handbook is complete for township distribution. Guidebook 4th Edition is in progress. Work to revise deeds is also in progress and will be sent to PFPA for feedback before completion. Counties are encouraged to attend the National Conference in Hershey 5/12-13/2014 in Hershey. PDA is monitoring the PERC/NRCS conflicts regarding Gas ROW’s on preserved farms. PA is approaching the half-million preserved acre mark.

**Farmland Preservation and Historic Resources**

President Knepper introduced Sally McMurray, Professor of History, Penn State University, and Katie Hess, Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission. Sally and Katie gave an overview of the PHMC CRGIS system and how it could assist in the evaluation of historic resources on farms.

**Agriculture and Economic Development**

President Knepper introduced Gary W. Smith, President/CEO, Chester County Economic Development Council and Jodi Gawker, Staff, Chester County Economic Development Council. Gary and Jodi discussed ways that CCED has connected farmers with financing, resources, and education to encourage growth of agricultural enterprises in Chester County.

Adjournment and Door Prizes – Matt Knepper presented door prizes.

***Bentzoni/Northampton moved to adjourn the meeting. Joe Petrella/Beaver County seconded. No objections. Motions carried.***